

Jerusalem under the authority of Pontius Pilate.

But this is just the briefest kind of an account of his life. It does not begin to take account his supernatural birth, his perfect character, his authoritative teaching, his mission, his miraculous works or his bodily resurrection from the dead. And in order Jesus to be who he claimed to be and in order for men today to be justified in believing on him, there must be proof of these unique claims for his deity.

### Prophecies Fulfilled by Christ

One of the primary evidences of the deity of Christ involves his fulfillment of great number of minutely detailed prophecies which were given hundreds of years before his birth. In all, there are over three hundred prophecies in the Old Testament which directly relate to the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Christ. Could there be mere coincidence or chance? It is so mathematically improbable that all these prophecies could have been fulfilled in the life of one man by sheer chance that we are justified in saying that it would have been humanly impossible! The only explanation that suffices is that the prophecies were given by men inspired by God and fulfilled by Jesus in harmony with the eternal purpose of God!

Ordinarily a person's biography is written after he has lived; but the life story of Christ was written generations before his birth! The *place* of his birth was foretold by prophet Micah. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratha, which art little to be among thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Judah; whose goings forth are from old, from everlasting." (5:2). The astounding prophecy made by Isaiah that *his mother would be a virgin!* "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (7:14). The work of *his forerunner*, John the Baptist, was announced in Malachi 3:1. Isaiah 53 is a most interesting chapter of prophecy about the *character of his ministry and death of Christ*. His "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem is foretold in Zechariah. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: be foretold thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon even upon a colt the foal of an ass." (9:9).

The dividing of his personal belongings and the casting of lots for his seamless robe were foretold in Psalm 22:18. "They part my garments among them, and upon my vesture do they cast lots." His resurrection was prophesied. "For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; neither wilt thou suffer **thy** holy one to see corruption." (Ps. 16:10). Christ's church, established on the first Pentecost following his resurrection, was the subject of a series of important Old Testament prophecies. It is nothing short of an amazing fact to learn that so much of Jesus' life among men was foretold in such great detail centuries before he was born! And it is not that Jesus fulfilled *some of the prophecies about the Messiah*, or even *most of them*. He fulfilled every prophecy about the Messiah in the minutest detail!

These prophecies and their fulfillment demonstrate the fact that Christ has been the center of the purposes of God from eternity! He pointed the way to the coming of the Messiah with prophecy after prophecy. He then saw to it that every prophecy was fulfilled by one whom he sent. God would not have thus authenticated an imposter! By all the evidence Jesus to be the absolute fulfillment of these inspired predictions, God placed his approval on the claims to deity made by Christ!

and speaking of the prophets who predicted the coming of this unique man he influenced men who lived and died hundreds of years before his birth! During his lifetime on the earth, whole families, cities and races of people were influenced by his powerful life. In the centuries following his earthly life men have continued to be drawn to Jesus and have lived and died for their faith in him. Kings and slaves, rich and poor, black and white, old and young have all been attracted to him.

How can it be explained? His influence is not due to his money, political power, social prestige, formal education or other traits which men have generally thought to be the "keys" to power. The Bible explains his influence in terms of his deity. The apostles taught that Jesus was not merely a man among men, but *God among men*. He is designated as God's "only begotten Son." (John 3:16). Peter said of him, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know; him, being delivered up by the determinate counsel of God, ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay: whom God raised up...Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." (Acts 2:22-24,36).

The claim and confession that "Jesus Christ is the Son of God" is the most critical issue of the whole Christian system, for if this premise is false then the whole religion that is based on him and his teaching is false. Thus we ask: Why should men believe in Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God? Let us investigate the evidence for his divinity.

### A Brief Account of His Life

We must be very careful in speaking of Jesus Christ as an "historical figure" lest we imply that Jesus came into being approximately 2000 years ago in the town of Bethlehem and that his life ended when he was crucified on a little hill outside Jerusalem. The fact of the matter is that Jesus has always existed. He, like his Heavenly Father, has existed from eternity and will always exist. He said this of himself when he said, "Before Abraham was born, I am." (John 8:58). John was speaking of the eternal Christ when he wrote, "In the beginning was the Word (i.e., Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1). But not only did he exist in eternity with God before coming in the flesh, he still lives today! He is without beginning or end! So let it be clearly understood that when we refer to "the historic Jesus" we are referring to that short period of time in his eternal life which was spent among men in the flesh.

The fleshly life of Jesus, by means of which he became the Son of Man as well as the Son of God, began in the little Jewish town of Bethlehem during the reign of Caesar Augustus. He grew to manhood in the home of Joseph, a carpenter, and his mother, Mary. Jesus, Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth and there Jesus stayed in company with his brothers and sisters until he was about thirty years old. (Cf. John 3:23). At that point in his life he began a period of teaching, preaching and miraculous works. The beginning point of that ministry was his baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist at which time the Holy Spirit descended and God spoke from heaven to acknowledge Jesus as his own son. (Luke 3:21-22). He attracted huge crowds as he travelled and taught and selected twelve men from among his followers to be his special helpers in the performance of his divine mission. We know these men as Jesus' twelve apostles. His ministry lasted something over three years and was terminated by his death on a Roman cross outside